

reviews

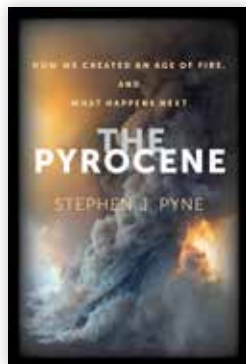


FLIGHT OF THE BUDGERIGAR

Penny Olsen,
NLA PUBLISHING, 2021, \$49.99

This wide-ranging history of Australia's native budgerigar is written by ornithologist Dr Penny Olsen. She has scoured past records, including indigenous history, to tell the story in words and fascinating images of this beloved bird. Olsen takes us on a trip that includes the early wild flocks in central Australia, through a thriving bird trade in the 1800s, to the competitive breeding and showing of budgerigars around the world. My favourite image shows the sheer numbers in wild flocks. Some of the history and the way birds were captured makes uncomfortable reading. But so is the recounting of the way thousands of young wild birds fell out of the sky after a perfect breeding season, following two weeks of extreme temperatures in 2009. This is likely to happen more often with the extremes of climate change. A fascinating insight into a world I knew little about.

Penny Woodward

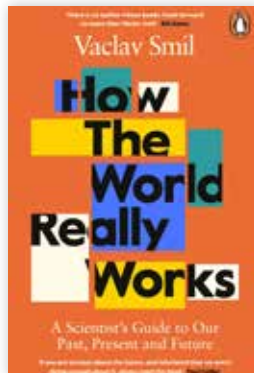


THE PYROCENE

Stephen J. Pyne
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
PRESS, 2021, \$44.95

Veteran environmental historian, Stephen Pyne's, *The Pyrocene*, is a tremendous read; an incisive account of the history and science of fire alongside the evolution of hominids. Historically, he explains that the First-fire appeared as soon as plants colonised continents, 420 million years ago. The Second-fire is the fire set by humans that spread alongside migrations post ice age. The Third-fire is the unleashing of fossil fuel combustion heat. That Third-fire has triggered the Age of Fire, or Pyrocene. It's a blazing, smoking, choking epoch, which left unchecked is a no-narrative, no-analogue tomorrow with no precedents for the upheavals we are about to experience. The only way, Pyne prescribes, to contend with these colossal climate fires, is to fight fire with fire. That is, carefully bringing more controlled fire back onto the landscape and making it "our best friend instead of our worst enemy".

Reese Halter



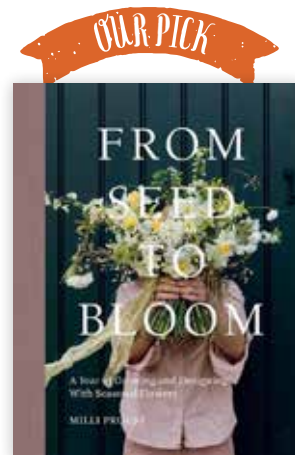
HOW THE WORLD REALLY WORKS

Vaclav Smil
PENGUIN, 2022, \$35

For people with access to so much information, most of us know little about how the world works. Distinguished Czech-Canadian scientist Vaclav Smil aims to put that right by explaining some fundamentals: such as how we use energy and produce food; the role of materials such as concrete and plastics; and how the environment is changing. Attempting to make predictions is futile, Smil argues. But he does weigh up what current realities might mean for the future, treading the middle ground between Pollyanna and catastrophiser. Unfortunately, this includes an insistence that mankind is so dependent on fossil fuels that the idea of rapid, painless decarbonisation is a pipe dream. Will we make good choices to handle the challenges we face? Being armed with the facts about how things really work can only help. *Simon Webster*

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FROM SEED TO BLOOM

Milli Proust
QUADRILLE, 2022, \$39.99

This is a rare gardening book – beautiful, readable and bursting with clever ideas. Subtitled, *A year of growing and designing with seasonal flowers*, it would suit both new and more experienced gardeners. Proust, who's based in the UK, is a flower farmer and floral designer. She's passionate about sustainability and offers practical growing advice, from setting up no-dig patches and appreciating the value of weeds, to looking at the colour palette of a garden. Inspiring images of floral arrangements are included, complete with ingredient lists and step-by-step guides. Proust walks readers through the ways they can use light, scale, contrast, balance and rhythm when arranging blooms. If you want to learn more about flower growing and floral design, this is your book.

Eliza Henry-Jones